

United States Geological Survey

The United States Geological Survey is a federal agency charged with the classification of public lands, the examination of geologic structures, and the investigation of mineral resources in the United States. The Geological Survey is within the Department of the Interior and is primarily a research and fact-finding agency.

Early in the 19th century geology was incidental to federal expeditions because federally sponsored science, a form of public works, raised constitutional questions. Congress eventually followed foreign and state examples, however, and authorized (beginning in 1867) four western surveys with geology as their main purpose. The federal surveys, supervised by the War and Interior departments, were Clarence King's Geological Exploration of the 40th Parallel, Ferdinand HAYDEN's Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories, John Wesley POWELL's Geographical and Geological Survey of the Rocky Mountain Region, and George M. Wheeler's Geographical Survey West of the 100th Meridian.

After rivalry developed among the civilian directors of the western surveys, Congress accepted the recommendation of the National Academy of Sciences that the functions of the several surveys be consolidated into one permanent agency. President Rutherford B. Hayes signed the bill establishing (1879) the Geological Survey. A legal interpretation of the enabling act restricted the agency to the West until 1882, when Congress extended the scope of its work to the eastern states. Over the years the Geological Survey has increasingly concentrated its activities on Earth resources. Congress extended (1962) the Geological Survey's investigations to areas outside the United States.

Anne Millbrooke

Bibliography: Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., *The U.S. Geological Survey* (1918); Dupree, A. Hunter, *Science in the Federal Government* (1957); Manning, Thomas G., *Government in Science: The U.S. Geological Survey 1867-1894* (1967).

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